

## **EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY**

### **Policy statement:**

#### **‘Strengthening our Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity’**

**The Board and Staff are committed to building a positive culture that recognises, respects and embraces, Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity through ensuring opportunity, access and fair treatment so that everyone has the chance to flourish.**

This policy sets out our organisation’s zero tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation, and unacceptable behaviour, and underlines the requirement for all staff and volunteers to contribute to creating a workforce culture and environment that exemplifies dignity, courtesy, respect, and consideration for all.

Energize is committed to being an equal opportunity employer and to ensuring that all employees and volunteers, Trustees, job applicants and prospective Trustees, and all other people with whom we come into contact with are treated fairly and are not subjected to unfair or unlawful discrimination.

Energize values the diversity of our staff, Trustees, volunteers, and stakeholders. We recognise that our ability to meet the needs of individuals and organisations across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin is improved by having a diverse workforce and a Board of Trustees who understand the needs of the communities we serve. We also wish to provide the best opportunities to all of our staff, based on their abilities and potential.

Our policy is designed to ensure that current and potential staff and volunteers are offered the same opportunities regardless of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment (together the “Protected Characteristics”) or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job. We seek to ensure that no one suffers, either directly or indirectly, as a result of unlawful discrimination. This extends beyond the individual's own characteristics, to cover discrimination by association and by perception.

We recognise that an effective Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will help our staff and volunteers develop towards their full potential, which is clearly in the best interests of both our workforce and our organisation. We aim to ensure that we not only observe the relevant legislation but also do whatever is necessary to provide genuine equity of opportunity.

We further recognise the benefits of recruiting staff, volunteers and Trustees from a range of backgrounds and skill sets, as this creates a Board and workforce where creativity and valuing difference in others thrives. We value the wealth of experience within the community in which we operate and aspire to have a Board and workforce who continually strive to improve their understanding of the diverse communities we serve.

We expect everyone who works for us to be treated and to treat others with respect. Our aim is to provide a working environment free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form that may affect the dignity of the individual. We actively encourage our workforce to share their different views and promote a harmonious and inclusive environment.

This policy is not contractual but aims to set out the way in which Energize aims to manage equal opportunity and address diversity in the workplace.

## Legal considerations

Energize is required by law not to unlawfully discriminate against its stakeholders and recognises its legal obligations under, and will abide by the requirements of, the Equality Act 2010 and any equivalent legislation (as amended) in any jurisdiction, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man and any later amendments to such legislation or subsequent equity related legislation that may be relevant to Energize. Energize will seek advice each time this Policy is reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect the current legal framework and good practice.

[Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010)

## Aims of this Policy

Whilst we fully accept all of our responsibilities under the current legislation outlined above, we also aim to go beyond the strict confines of the law to provide equity of opportunity for all. We aim to:

- recognise that everyone has a right to their distinctive and diverse identities,
- have a workforce and Board that understands the needs of the community we serve,
- understand how diversity can improve our ability to be a better organisation,
- ensure we are responsive and inclusive to our stakeholders, partners and communities needs,
- provide all workers and Trustees with the necessary training and development they need to contribute to our organisation's goals,
- provide a supportive, open environment where our workforce may use their talents fully, and where staff, volunteers, Trustees and stakeholders are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, in an environment free from abuse or offensive behaviour, bullying or harassment, intimidation or prejudice regardless of their race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment, impairment, responsibility for dependants, social background or any other individual characteristic which may unfairly affect their opportunities in life.

Furthermore, we recognise the benefits of helping our workforce to balance the responsibilities of their work and private life.

Learning to work with people's differences, visible or not, enables us to all work together effectively and helps us to anticipate and meet the needs of our stakeholders; recruit, retain and develop the best people; act responsibly in the communities of which we are a part; and also fulfil our legal commitments.

## Responsibility for this Policy

The whole Trustee Board is collectively responsible for the implementation and oversight of this Policy with the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Champion playing a lead role. Furthermore, the Trustee Board will expect the CEO to be accountable for the efficient and effective implementation of the Policy itself (operationally) and the processes and procedures which flow from it. However, there is also shared accountability and responsibility across all members of the Trustee Board and staff team in promoting equity of opportunity and encouraging diversity across the organisation and its activities. Managers have a crucial role to play in promoting equity of opportunity in their own areas of responsibility. As employers we are liable for the actions of our workforce and Trustees, and therefore our managers are responsible for this policy's successful implementation and should take steps to ensure their team members understand and follow this policy.

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All staff, volunteers and Trustees, irrespective of their role or seniority, will be given guidance and instruction, through our induction and other training, as to their responsibility and role in promoting equity of opportunity and not discriminating unfairly or harassing colleagues or applicants, nor encouraging others to do so or tolerating such behaviour.

## **Employment and Volunteer Policies**

We will ensure that all of our policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices to promote equity of opportunity within the organisation and to remove barriers experienced by marginalised groups in seeking employment or volunteering opportunities with us.

We commit to enabling appropriate training and supervision for all those who are responsible for recruitment and selection ensuring they are familiar with this policy and apply it in conjunction with our recruitment Standard Operating Procedures and our Recruitment Policy.

Further information regarding our recruitment procedures can be found in our Recruitment Policy (see below)



Recruitment Policy

## **The Working Environment**

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that our working environment does not prevent people from taking up positions for which they are suitably qualified. This may include physical adaptations or more flexible ways of working (where reasonable, appropriate and practical).

## **Training and Development**

Energize recognises that equal opportunity responsibilities do not end at selection; we are committed to ensuring that wherever possible all our workforce receive the widest possible range of development opportunities for advancement, and all Trustees receive the necessary development opportunities required to fulfil the obligations of their roles.

We recognise that our ability to meet our stakeholders' diverse needs is improved by having a diverse workforce and Board which has the skills and understanding to achieve our strategic goals. We will take all appropriate steps to ensure that all our workforce receive fair consideration of their training and development needs. All staff will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager. Opportunities for promotion and training will be communicated and made available to everyone on a fair and equal basis.

The provision of training will be reviewed to ensure that provisions are made where necessary to enable part-time workers, remote workers or those returning to work following a break to benefit from training. No age limits apply for entry to training or development schemes which are open to all employees.

## **Terms and Conditions of Employment**

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We will ensure that all of our policies including compensation, benefits and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied without regard to sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job.

These will be reviewed regularly to ensure there is no discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable.

## **Retirement**

We have no fixed retirement age and anyone who wishes to work beyond state pension age may choose to do so.

## **Bullying and harassment**

All staff, volunteers, and Trustees, irrespective of status, have the right to be treated with respect and dignity at work. Energize actively encourages a working environment in which its employees feel valued and respected. We appreciate that conflict can arise through misunderstanding or differences of opinion and therefore we aim to resolve situations as quickly and as near to the point of origin and at the lowest level. Where possible, issues should be resolved informally by discussing the matter in confidence with the individual(s) involved.

Bullying and harassment, i.e. conduct that violates a person's dignity, or behaviour against an individual that is intimidating, degrading, offensive, humiliating, or malicious will not be tolerated. It may be related to any protected characteristic of the individual (whether perceived or real), or by association (i.e. related to the individual's relationship or dealings with others who have that protected characteristic). It may be persistent, or an isolated incident and can take many forms, from relatively mild 'banter' to actual physical violence. It includes not only situations occurring whilst at work, but also at any time on our premises, or externally whilst attending social functions or training courses etc. It also includes emails, phone calls and texts made outside of work using either our or the individual's own equipment, as well as via social networking sites.

Any acts of bullying and harassment committed in the course of employment or volunteering with Energize will not be tolerated, and any individual who feels that they have been subjected to harassment or bullying should, where they feel able to do so, inform the perpetrator, either verbally or in writing, that the behaviour is unacceptable to them and it must stop. If an individual is not comfortable with speaking to the perpetrator directly then they may involve another member of staff or an independent that with consent will endeavour to mediate the situation. Where this fails, or a serious incident of bullying or harassment occurs, the individual should refer to our Grievance Procedure (see section below).

Equally, anyone who witnesses incidents of harassment or bullying should report this to the Chief Executive or the Chair of the Board.

Serious examples of bullying and harassment may constitute gross misconduct which could lead to summary dismissal, in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure (see section below).

## Grievances, Disputes and Disciplinary Procedure

Disciplinary action in line with our Disciplinary Procedures, including dismissal from employment, termination of a volunteering agreement or removal from the board of trustees, may be taken against any staff member, volunteer or Trustee found guilty of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Further information regarding our disciplinary procedures can be found in our Disciplinary Policy (see below)



Disciplinary  
Procedure

Staff, volunteers and Trustees who believe they have been discriminated against and have not been able to resolve this informally are advised to use our internal Grievance Procedure (see below)



Grievance Procedure

An individual who brings a complaint of discrimination must not be less favourably treated.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that employees, volunteers or Trustees who have, are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic are not dismissed or disciplined for performance or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other members of the workforce.

## Working with Stakeholders / Partners

Staff are expected to make our stakeholders and partners aware of their rights and responsibilities with regards to equity of opportunity.

Anyone who feels they have been denied equity of opportunity whilst working with Energize will be encouraged to make their complaint in writing so that their concerns can be investigated and responded to. Stakeholders and partners should be referred to our Complaints Policy for further information. (see below).



Complaints  
Procedure

We reserve the right to withdraw our engagement with any stakeholder or partner if that individual/organisation behaves in a discriminatory, disruptive or abusive manner to anyone connected to Energize.

We are committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and make every effort to ensure that our services and communications are accessible to people with additional needs, including those with visual, audio, cognitive and/or physical impairments, and individuals/organisations who are unable to communicate effectively in English.

## **Positive Action**

We may decide to provide specific training or development opportunities aimed at under-represented groups to enable them to compete equally for job or volunteering opportunities, and we will do this wherever we feel it may be necessary to promote our equity, diversity, and inclusion policy.

Positive discrimination (selecting a candidate purely on grounds of membership of a minority group) is unlawful (apart from employees on maternity leave or at risk of redundancy, where special rules apply).

However, where two candidates are equally qualified and suitable in all other respects, we may decide to offer the post to a candidate who is from a group that is under-represented in our workforce at that level. This principle will also be applied to the Board of Trustees when deemed appropriate to do so.

## **Communication of this Policy**

All staff will be made aware of this policy and a copy will be included in the Employee Handbook given to all employees on joining us. Volunteers and Trustees will also be made aware of this policy.

In addition, Staff, volunteers and Trustees will be reminded of the policy through such means as advertisements, application forms, training courses, and any other methods which we consider appropriate.

## **Implementation, Monitoring and Review of this Policy**

This policy will take effect from 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 and will be supported by our Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) and People Plan. The Energize Trustee Champion for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will sponsor production of the DIAP and hold the Chief Executive to account over implementation. Regular monitoring of the DIAP will be provided through quarterly meetings of the internal Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group and through an annual review process with progress and areas for further improvement communicated via an annual EDI Board report.

In order to ensure that we follow best practice and keep ourselves up to date, we will liaise with external organisations to ensure continuous improvement of this policy.

Relevant data will be collected to support this policy and the DIAP. Personal details provided by staff, volunteers, Trustees, or applicants for the purposes of equal opportunity monitoring will be used anonymously, and when collected during recruitment will be kept apart from all other records and not used for any other purpose.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to Pete Ezard Energize CEO [pete.ezard@energizestw.org.uk](mailto:pete.ezard@energizestw.org.uk)

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